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ABSTRACT

This discussion of the need to improve the quality of professional formation within the harmonization of teaching information professionals in a developing country argues that a firm theoretical area of knowledge is needed, and suggests that this paper can be considered as a point of reference for the harmonization of teaching the three professions. Topics considered include: (1) background information on schools of librarianship in Colombia; (2) justification for structuring a theoretical body of knowledge for the profession; (3) theoretical area objectives within the harmonization program--with a view to the internal model within the developing country; and (4) minimum contents proposed for a curriculum. (CGD)

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NECESSITY OF AN SPACE FOR THE STUDY OF THE THEORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS AS PART OF THE HARMONISATION IN THE TEACHING OF LIBRARIANSHIP, ARCHIVISTIC AND DOCUMENTATION

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NECESSITY OF AN SPACE FOR THE STUDY OF THE THEORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS AS PART OF THE HARMONIZATION IN THE TEACHING OF LIBRARIANSHIP, ARCHIVISTIC AND DOCUMENTATION

This paper tries to state the need of improving the quality of professional formation within the harmonization and to propose the need of estructurating a theorical area that must be constituted in spine, for the formation of the professionals in information, and as point of reference for the harmonization of teaching the three professions.

1. ANTECEDENTS

At undergraduate level, there are three schools of librarianship in Colombia. There is not an special educative institution for documentalists neither for archivists. One of them, since it creation in 1972, was founded as school of librarianhship and archivistics and confers the title of librarian and archivist to its graduates; another one, gives courses on archivistic, and the third one has recently included it. In summary, in the three schools have not happened harmonization, but instead a really integration. Actually, professionals on information are being formed in such way they are able of performing themselves as librarians, archivists or documentalists.

The constant effort to have a better formation of human resources in the country, although the profession is so new, has given as results an extraordinary development of the information systems. However, the evaluation and analysis of the role of the profession and the information systems in front of the challenges that arise from the fact of belonging to a developing country and region requires a very careful study, analysis, and a deep reflexion about the role of the information as fundamental variable of the situation of each country.

2. JUSTIFICATION

This new restate suposes new knowledge, new methodologies, and a new conception of the profession and the professionals, which will arise from a clear teorical conception that must be developed. and sistematized. Actually this is the definitive point for a successful survival of the profession, and the formation of information professionals, at least in Colombia. Why do we consider that the main issue is the structuration of a theorical body about the information problem?

Because of the following reasons:

a. First of all, it is proper of any profession to lay upon a theorical body which allows whom performs it to work based on concepts and principles more than on formulas.
b. The profession must have a clear concience of its function in a developing country, so that they can contribute to the solution of problems.
c. In a world that is continously changing in the politic, economic, social, cientific and technological fields, the principles and conceptual bases help to keep the horizont of the profession and to understand more easely the new roles without loosing the basic objetives.
d. The main objetive is the development of a knowledge area, as the one arised from the relation information-society.
e. The modern university formation is oriented toward teaching the student to think, to solve problems, to find out, to be, to imagine and to study, so he can help social problems to be solutionated in his area, and contribute to create knowledge in it.
f. The academic formation must relay on main principles of the science it development and within time it might constitute objetives.

In the colombian case, we experiment the need of a strong theorical formation of the professionals so they can made innovations, evaluation and research, in summary all of them must generate ideas, which comes from the formation and stimulus for making scientific lecture of the reality and transform it through innovation, research and practice.

We are completely sure that if in a general sense, would be a continiuing conceptual debate, to the interior of the schools of librarianship, it would not be necessary to propose the harmonization, because it logically would arise as result of the mentioned debate, and they will be capable to argue its convenience or inconvenience.

It is interesting to observe how UNISIST in the first place, and then PGI arised as result of a worked and debated conceptual support: harmonization, is the result of a solid, modern and complex theory about what information should be for development, is supported by each one of the more connote specialists and scientists of information, if this theory would not existed, it has not gave origen to a new conception of the profession and of the information professional, that is what harmonization tries about. Although when concrete actions were formulated, it was not considered necessary to begin harmonization creating a space for discussion about the promotory idea, the mentioned space will be for the discussion of the great problems of the profession, the information and the underdevelopment.

As Vera Kubatova (1) states, in the conformation of a scientific dscipline, the most important aspect, is up to what point the given discipline proves its own value in the science due to the utility of its concepts, and up to what point the discipline satisfies the need and requirements of the social development. Is the scientific discipline a theorical-practice activity, so there must exist a theorical work that defines, orient and design the practical applications, which will be useful to the society. We believe harmonization has enfatized in the second statement, giving the professional, tools so that he can administrate in a better way, make good use of technology and make studies about people who ask for services, but which is the theorical background of this work, why must it be done, which are the main principles that may indicate him that even though he is a very good administrator, he is doing a good job as information professional? Which one is his conception when evaluating and using techology? Which is the conception of use and users of information?

We agree that harmonizing the areas of administration, technology and users is of great importance, but if the harmonization in these areas is not theorically sustained, it might occur that:

- The reason for making harmonization is not understood.
- There will be no change in the traditional attitude of professionals, and they will continue the same way.
- There will be a lack of professional identity, if professionals understand that the basic areas for them are administration and technology.
- There is not any development of new models and thecnologies for handling information systems.

The need of a conceptual base for librarianship is stated by Hense Shera, appointed by H. Curtis (2);

> "The great need of the liberay profession today is to formulate a pofessional philosophy that will meet the rapidly changing needs of society for recorded knowledge. We must re-efine our role in society.... and make total communication process..."

Jean Durrace (3) appointing Butter and Winter, asks for the need of a conceptual model for librarianship when he affirms:

> "A basic problem faced by the profession and therefore by those who seek to develop continuing education for it, is libratianship's inability to develop a body of theory upon which to base practice."

Is there any need of harmonizating of a theorical base in the three professions related with information? Robert Warner (4), says:

> "For greater usefulness, prestige, importance , and economic rewards; all goals of both professions, it will be very important, even necessary, to develop a clear, sophisticate core concepts that become the foundations for all information handling professionals."

Finally, we expect that the theorical area gives foundation and coherence to other areas of harmonization.

From the technological area we expect:

- Capacity of evaluating the falling of new information technologies within society.
- To distinguish the place of technology in the information professional practice.
- Systems for evaluating of the different technological models for information management.
- Basic orientations for technology adoptions and adaptations.
- Be able to propose new applications, behind those traditionals, for management of files and libraries.

From the administration area we expect:

- Clear definition of which is the "business" of the profession.
- Judgement for selecting administrative theories and models.
- Definition of social and politic half-close in the information systems.

From users we expect:

- Identification of a society that searchs "liberation" as user of the "profession" in its whole.
- Generated solution alternatives from different fields of the social activity. For example: health, education, research, industry, agriculture, atc.
- Identification of the different types of information required by a development society.

3. THEORICAL AREA OBJETIVES WITHIN HARMONIZATION PROGRAM

1. The main objetive of a theorical area in the formation of "infomation professionals" in Latin America is to develop its own theorical model about information role in the proper circumstances of the Latin American countries and to orient in such sense the formation of human resources.
2. Make the information professional a critical observer of its own country reality, being able of proposing alternative solutions from its own field of work.

3. Making the librarianship schools not only professional producers but generators of knowledge about information and contributors to the reality transformation.
4. To be a point of reference for orientation and coordination of the other areas of the curriculum in its whole.

In the colombian case, we wonder if the professional information has a clear concience of its great responsability and power , and if the information services had obey to some type of society, of man, of development, or if they had been developed, without much awarness about which interests are they serving. Possibly, they have always served tne interest that are not convenient for the country, and represents dependency and poverty.

How much time and resources would been profitably if the plans and programs that have been managed to implement in the information field in Colombia and America Latina, would been the result of the analysis and research of the librarianship schools, having a clear position of the serious problems of our countries. At present, the models we have, are data bases, technology, administrative theories, that are transfered through the librarianship curriculum in the schools. Are these the models and programs to confront the more critical problems of information of our countries?

Asking about the strategics of development for Colombia and Latina America, it is observed that models transplant and the imposition of development programs through international entities o through "experts" have been the main strategy during the last decades, with the following results:

a. A foreign debt that asphyxiate the weak derdeveloping economies.

b. A situation of misery in which the great part of the people has not reached minimum conditions of nutrition, education, health and living.

c. As result of the above mentioned, the social and politic problem is such, that in some countries a war climate is lived among the people who defends old structures and the people that fight for new ones.

d. Our countries are stages of the confrontation of the power of the two worldwide blocks, to whom the only interest they have is tt maintain their colonies.

The failure of the imported models have arised as result the need of developing another development strategy, so we may talk about two clear alternatives related to development for our countries:

a. The ideal model of development of the west capitalist countries like United States and Europe that has been implemented in our countries.

b. The model that each country internally to each country for its own development builts.

Some implications of this reality for the manage of information are analyzed by Rosario Gassol de Horowitz in an excellent syntesis on the paper she presented at the IFLA/85 preseminar about Public Libraries "Librarianship and social change in Latin America", where she textually affirms regarding to the strategy developed in our counties:

> The challenging perspective, then, basically argues that for true change to take place, a revolution of ideas and values must accompany a transformation of structures. For this reason, Latin American theologians, social scientists, planners, educators, prefer to substitute for "development" the term "liberation", whhich implies that the underdevelopment assume control of their own change process. What was to be known as the "liberation" literature affected a variety of fields including the communication field, and was to have a great impact on information research an the concept of information."

4 MINIMUM CONTENTS REQUIRED

1. Information.
   - 1.1 Information and human knowledge.
   - 1.2 Information and individual.
     - Human information processing.
     - Acquisition forms.
     - Information processing.
   - 1.3 Information and society.
     - Information flow within society.
     - Informed societies vs. uninformed societies.
     - Obstacles for information circulation.
   - 1.4 Types of informatio.
   - 1.5 Information industry.

2. Information as study object.
   2.1 Information as study object.
   2.2 Archivistic.
   2.3 Librarianship.
   2.4 Document administration.
   2.5 Information science.
   2.6 For each one of the above mentioned, determination of:
       - Theorical structure.
       - Method and object.
       - Present tendencies.
   2.7 Object, method and location in the knowledge field of a new discipline encharge of information.

3. Information and development.
   3.1 Development and underdevelopment.
       - General theory of development.
       - External model vs. internal development model, for occidental countries.
       - Dependency structural analysis.
       - Techonoly transfer.
   3.2 Country basic problems regarding economic, social, politic, scientific and institutional.
   3.3 Basic problems regarding management information systems.
       - Taking decisions.
       - Democracy.
       - Power.
   3.4 Determination of basic information attitudes and needs according to social characteristics.
   3.5 Historical evaluation of information plans and programs and its present situation.
   3.6 Information policies.
   3.7 Policy evolution of the international information management programs.
   3.8 Basic aspects of an information policy.